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# CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

*by*

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## CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

*By Hal Bridges*

Today as the American people look ahead to the centennial year 1961, their interest in the Civil War era seems to be at an all-time high. Civil War fan clubs flourish, popular novelists choose Civil War themes, and actors stride across television screens trying to look as grayly dignified as Lee or as gauntly wise as Lincoln. Historians, too, are responding to the times. They are increasing their output of scholarly studies in the Civil War and Reconstruction period, thereby creating a problem in sheer quantity of reading matter for those of us who teach American history and would like to keep abreast of changing interpretations in our field. Even if one considers only works published since 1950, this output appears rather formidable. Yet, by selecting some of the more important and useful books, and seeing how they relate to fundamental issues in Civil War and Reconstruction history, we may be able to obtain a good grasp of the new knowledge of the fifties.

One fundamental issue is what caused the war? What tore the nation apart in 1861? Those interested in the full complexity of historical debate on this point would do well to consult Thomas J. Pressly's *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, a good survey of what historians have said from 1861 to the present about the main questions involved in the conflict. The key to the debate is slavery. Some of the earliest interpreters of the war held that slavery was the ultimate cause; Northern historians, especially, wrote about the "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery. Southern historians on the other hand have tended to devote space to proving that slavery was not as important a factor as constitutional or economic issues.

The economic interpretation of the Civil War came to full bloom in 1927 with the publication of *The Rise of American Civilization* by Charles and Mary Beard. This widely used textbook described the Civil War as essentially an economic conflict during which Northern businessmen won control of the national government from Southern planters. Slavery, argued the Beards, was only

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a surface issue. Their hypothesis dominated historical writing in the economic-minded thirties, and has remained influential down to the present day.

Of late, however, the wheel shows signs of turning full cycle. Scholars today are once more devoting much attention to the slavery controversy, either implicitly recognizing its importance or openly naming it the main factor in the coming of the war.

The Civil War was "a war over slavery and the future position of the Negro race in North America," declares Allan Nevins in *The Emergence of Lincoln*. This study is a continuation of the multi-volume history of the Civil War era that Nevins has undertaken under the overall title *Ordeal of the Union*. The four volumes that he has published so far cover the period from the late 1840's through the inauguration of Lincoln. His history is a comprehensive, detailed, well-organized and exceptionally readable narrative, which expertly relates political events to the social background of the times. In stressing the moral issue of slavery as the ultimate cause of the war Nevins has taken an interpretive position similar to that of James Ford Rhodes, whose *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* his own work is now supplanting.

Two monographs that demonstrate the importance of the slavery issue in a single key state are *South Carolina Goes to War, 1861-1865*, by Charles Edward Cauthen, and *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1852-1860*, by Harold S. Schultz. Both authors show how the security of slave property was of paramount concern to state political leaders, and how, when these leaders became convinced that the anti-slavery party would rule in Washington, they prepared South Carolinians for secession and led them out of the union.

Another monograph which deals, perforce, with the slavery issue is James C. Malin's *The Nebraska Question, 1852-1854*. Malin—a historian noted for hewing his own independent path through the facts, let the chips or the wounded opponents fall where they may—sweeps aside the long-standing controversy about Stephen A. Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska Act by adducing fresh evidence to show that Douglas' chief motive in forcing the Act through Congress was the statesmanlike one of opening the West to railroads. Like George Fort Milton, Douglas' most distinguished bi-

ographer, Malin portrays the Little Giant as a political realist who saw that slavery could not expand into the Western territories and that therefore the whole question of such expansion was a false political issue. He blames pro-slavery fanatics for pressuring Douglas into inserting in the Act the specific repeal of the Missouri Compromise that infuriated Northerners and revived the sectional conflict.

This emphasis upon the irrational, emotional aspects of the sectional struggle is a leading theme in the work of one of the distinguished elder statesmen among historians of the South, Avery O. Craven. Some twenty years ago Craven and the late James G. Randall began laying the foundations of what came to be called the "revisionist" approach to the Civil War. They held that it was a needless, or "repressible conflict," to use Craven's phrase, and that it had been fomented by fanatics who grossly exaggerated slavery issues that were, in actuality, relatively unimportant.

Craven's latest book on the coming of the war is *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861*, Volume VI in the outstanding cooperative series, *A History of the South*, edited by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter. In this volume Craven continues, as he has in recent years, to refine and somewhat modify his earlier interpretations. As his title indicates, he stresses the development of Southern nationalism, and feels that it was primarily this emotion which led Southerners to break the ties of union. Slavery he considers important mainly because it became a focal point of other North-South antagonisms. Born and educated in the South, he is as always quite sympathetic toward his native region. But in this book he seems to have reached his farthest remove from his and Randall's earlier concepts of a foolish generation of Americans who blundered into a needless war.

After all, the continuing flow of events does change our views of the past. In the light of the second World War and Korea, and in the shadow of another world cataclysm that might literally end all war and everything else too, it is not so easy to conceive of repressible conflicts as it was in the disillusioned twenties and thirties. Historians of a younger generation than Craven's are showing a tendency to abandon the argument over whether the Civil War was inevitable, taking the pragmatic position that the irrepressible-

repressible debate is simply irresolvable. To give one example, Kenneth M. Stampp in his useful study, *And the War Came*, calmly eschews the debate over inevitability and contents himself with a penetrating analysis of Northern public opinion as reflected mainly through contemporary newspaper editorials. The picture that emerges is not especially flattering to national leaders either North or South; all take on the appearance of self-seeking politicians. Even Lincoln, Stampp indicates, was guided not so much at this time by lofty principle as by public opinion. As for the slavery issue, Stampp names it along with "other economic differences" as an important cause of the hostilities that began in 1861.

Perhaps all this concern with slavery among students of the sectional controversy stems in part from the increased prominence of the Negro in American life as a result of current efforts to end racial segregation in the United States. The Negro is no longer the nation's "invisible man," and as he forces political leaders to take note of him he also draws the attention of historians. At least this may help explain the historians' increased concern with slavery as a cause of the Civil War and also their renewed interest in it as a social institution.

Important among the recent institutional studies of slavery is Kenneth M. Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*. The book places Stampp in sharp opposition to Ulrich B. Phillips, whose authoritative work *American Negro Slavery* appeared in 1918. Phillips regarded slavery as a pretty good way of life for both master and man. Stampp views it as a moral wrong and a Southern tragedy, an institution productive of much suffering for the slave and little good for anyone. Phillips has long been criticized as being too sympathetic toward slavery. Stampp is now being accused of going to the opposite extreme. But no one interested in the subject should overlook the great amount of fresh material on every aspect of slavery that fills the sombre pages of *The Peculiar Institution*.

Outstanding among local studies of slavery is James Benson Sellers' *Slavery in Alabama*. Like so many other historians in this field, Sellers has had to rely too much upon the records of the larger plantations, for the very good reason that owners of only one slave or a few often kept no records; yet he has managed to produce a bal-

anced monograph which takes account of the many complexities and contradictions of slavery, with its strange mixture of benevolence and brutality, and he gives much useful information on topics sometimes neglected by historians, such as overseers and runaways.

Gilbert Hobbs Barnes' *The Antislavery Impulse*, published in 1933, remains a strong influence on the historical interpretation of the antislavery movement. Barnes held that the Western antislavery men led by Theodore Dwight Weld were considerably more important to the movement than Easterners like William Lloyd Garrison. The recent biography, *Theodore Weld, Crusader for Freedom*, by Benjamin P. Thomas upholds this thesis as does also another biography of an associate of Weld, *James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist*, by Betty Fladeland. Be it said for the Western school that they have much evidence on their side, but before dismissing Garrison as an insignificant fanatic one should read Ralph Korngold's treatment of him as a humanitarian social reformer in *Two Friends of Man*. The other crusader in the book is Wendell Phillips.

Closely associated with antislavery, but tending more and more to dominate every aspect of the Civil War, is the towering historical figure of Lincoln. So attractive is his name to the reading public that it is often dragged into book titles where it does not belong. Nowadays anything in any way connected with the Union war effort is likely to be proclaimed on a book cover as Lincoln's, from sanitary commissions to primitive submarines, from remote friends of Lincoln to remoter enemies. If the trend continues, we may yet see some such anomaly as "Lincoln's Jefferson Davis."

But what have the historians been doing with Lincoln besides making free use of his name? Essentially, the true Lincoln scholars have been stripping away the myths and revealing the great and very human being hidden beneath them. James G. Randall died while working on the fourth and last volume of a major study, *Lincoln the President*; the work has been ably completed by Richard N. Current. As much as any other one writer, Randall helped to rescue Lincoln from the myth-makers and romanticizers and to restore the flesh and blood President. In doing this he has sometimes written adverse criticism. As early as 1926 he showed in his *Constitutional Problems under Lincoln*—still the definitive study of the subject, and recently republished in a revised edition—that

under the stress of the war emergency Lincoln countenanced certain limited suspensions of civil liberties, such as the privilege of habeas corpus, and trial by jury, that perhaps he might better have protected. In the first volumes of *Lincoln the President* Randall suggested that Lincoln may have been playing timid politics in refusing to reiterate publically his moderate antislavery views during the secession crisis that followed his election to the presidency in 1860. On the other hand, Randall rejected the old accusation that Lincoln deliberately maneuvered the South into firing on Fort Sumter in order to unite the North in war against the Confederacy, and showed how tenuous is the evidence on which this charge rests.

The third volume of Randall's great work takes up the constitutional problems dealt with in the earlier monograph, and also provides the reader much fascinating insight into Lincoln's mind, personality, and character. Using to some extent new evidence that he discovered, Randall portrays this "strange quaint great man" as an increasingly selfless expert in human relations, whose working rule amid the explosive frictions of his high office became "quarrel not at all."

Volume four covers the last sixteen months of Lincoln's presidential career, omitting the familiar story of the assassination. In these topically organized chapters Randall considers Lincoln's plan of Reconstruction, and Current completes the work with a solid exposition of such subjects as opposition to Lincoln from the Radical Republicans, the election of 1864, and the Thirteenth Amendment.

Considered as a whole, *Lincoln the President* is not in the strict sense of the term a new interpretation. What Randall says has in the main already been revealed. But in concentrating not upon Lincoln's whole life but upon the presidency with its many problems of transcendent importance, Randall outlined for himself a field of study in which he could present such a wealth of discerning and well-organized detail that the total effect is of newness. As David M. Potter has written, Randall has recreated "the Lincoln of mundane greatness." It is an achievement that will not soon be surpassed.

Among the Lincoln legends that have been scotched by the historians are the ones that tell how he grieved over the death of his



only love, Ann Rutledge, how he once jilted Mary Todd at the church door, and how she later married him for spite and made their married life into a constant torment for poor Abraham. Yarns like these, consisting of varying mixtures of half-truth and fiction, were spread abroad after Lincoln's death by his former law partner, William Herndon, and were once widely believed. But modern scholars like Randall, Paul Angle, and David Donald have now thoroughly exposed Herndon as an amateur psychoanalyst and myth-maker who often twisted the truth in order to provide spicy entertainment for his readers and auditors and vent a personal spite against Mary Lincoln. Ruth Painter Randall, drawing upon the work of her husband and others as well as her own research, has published *Mary Lincoln: Biography of A Marriage*, which convincingly sums up the evidence that the Lincolns were a loving and happily married couple. If anything, Mrs. Randall may go a bit too far in minimizing the unhappy aspects, such as the distressing increase of Mary Lincoln's mental instability in the trying war years. Mrs. Randall's latest book, *Lincoln's Sons*, rounds out the picture of this famous American family, and in the process provides so much perceptive description of Lincoln as father and husband in the White House that it adds a new dimension to Lincoln the president.

David Donald, a former student of Randall's, has thought deeply about Lincoln and the Civil War, and some of the provocative fruits of this thinking can be found in a collection of his essays entitled *Lincoln Reconsidered*. Perhaps the most interesting, and most controversial, of his interpretations is the argument that the Radicals in the Republican party were not a consistent and cohesive faction, and that the leading historian of Lincoln and the Radicals, T. Harry Williams, has exaggerated the differences between them.

Williams himself has recently set forth a controversial thesis on Lincoln. In *Lincoln and His Generals* he maintains that Lincoln ably directed Union military strategy, and that contrary to Grant's memoirs this direction did not end when Grant became general-in-chief. Indeed, Grant's final objective, to destroy Lee's army rather than to capture Richmond, appears under Williams' analysis to be essentially Lincolnian. Not all historians by any means agree with

this argument, nor with Williams' contention that the modern system of army command developed under Lincoln. To some extent it is all a question of how terms are interpreted, of how the evidence is emphasized and argued. But though the present situation is fluid, it is safe to predict that a campaigner of Williams' historical skill will not be easily vanquished.

New only in the sense that it compresses the best Lincoln scholarship into one readable volume, but important because of that accomplishment, is *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*, by Benjamin P. Thomas. It supersedes Lord Charnwood's life of Lincoln as the standard brief work. Another one-volume biography of merit is Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, a condensation of his great multivolume study, revised in keeping with new research.

In sharp contrast to Lincoln, the leader of the other nation in the Civil War, Jefferson Davis, has fared poorly at the hands of historians. The full-scale, objective, modern biography of him is yet to come. Of biographies in existence, some authorities would still choose as best the one published in 1907 by William E. Dodd.

Historians used to say of Davis, in effect, "Well, of course he wasn't a genius like Lincoln, but all things considered he was probably the ablest national leader available to the Confederacy." Now even this faint praise is being withdrawn. Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood have done a biography of General Joseph E. Johnston, *A Different Valor*, in which Davis emerges as a second protagonist. He is anything but impressive. Using evidence that cannot easily be brushed aside, the authors depict a petty, vindictive president who seems less concerned with winning the war than with smiting his personal enemy, Johnston.

That Davis was indeed far too quarrelsome for the good of his nation is also the conclusion of Bell Irvin Wiley in *The Road to Appomattox*, an admirably objective analysis of factors that led to the defeat of the Confederacy. Wiley regards Davis as honest, courageous, and devoted to the South, but feels that his numerous personal faults as president outweighed his virtues. Probably all Civil War historians would agree, however, that the full evidence on Davis remains to be assessed. Some biographer may yet rehabilitate the leader of the Lost Cause.

Quantitatively, military history currently overshadows every other historical approach to the Civil War. This in itself is a new trend, a marked change from the twenties and thirties, when Charles and Mary Beard could remark how unimportant the actual fighting was, and how the grass soon covered the Civil War battlefields. Here again we see the impact of the present upon historical fashion. We live today in a military age, with an immensely popular war hero in the White House, a national budget geared to war needs, and military men as never before helping to shape national policy. Military history, in the militaristic fifties, is no longer unfashionable. Perhaps, too, the Civil War battles are popular with readers because they offer escape into a world where galloping cavalymen and stirring bayonet charges to the wild rebel yell or the deep-throated Federal "Hurrah!" seem more agreeable to live with than the hydrogen bomb.

Whatever the explanation, military histories in various forms are appearing in such numbers that only a fraction of them can be mentioned here. Nothing yet excels the monumental Southern military history of Douglas Southall Freeman, but on the Northern side of the lines a massive monument is growing: Kenneth P. Williams, army officer and mathematician turned historian, has so far published four volumes on the campaigns of the Union armies under the title *Lincoln Finds A General*, carrying his narrative through the capture of Vicksburg by Grant, his hero. Impressive in its scope and detail, his work has won high praise from some critics. Others have pointed out that Williams rides his personal biases hard—he despises General George B. McClellan, for example—and tends to ignore manuscript evidence that corrects the *Official Records*, which he loves to comb minutely. Whether he can attain the judicious balance of Freeman remains to be seen.

From a different viewpoint, Bruce Catton has written the history of the Army of the Potomac in a series of separate books, *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, *Glory Road: The Bloody Route from Fredericksburg to Gettysburg*, and the Pulitzer prize-winning *A Stillness at Appomattox*. This is descriptive rather than critical military history, but Catton's facts are generally accurate, his style forceful and artistic, his ability to convey the sight, sound, and excitement of

battle unexcelled. His volumes are enriched by his use of colorful detail drawn from regimental histories.

A brief summary of some of the more important military biographies would include on the Confederate side the previously mentioned life of Johnston by Govan and Livingood, T. Harry Williams' *P. G. T. Beauregard*, which also sheds light on Davis' enmities and the many weaknesses of the Confederate high command, and two studies by Frank E. Vandiver, *Ploughshares into Swords: Josiah Gorgas and Confederate Ordnance*, and *Mighty Stonewall*. Vandiver's life of Gorgas presents much valuable information on the Confederate ordnance bureau that Gorgas headed; the life of Stonewall Jackson provides a wealth of illuminating material on Jackson's pre-Civil War career that is not to be found in G. F. R. Henderson's biography or in Freeman. On the Northern side, Grant has been the subject of two revealing books by Lloyd Lewis and Clarence Edward Macartney. Lewis, before his death, published one volume of what would probably have been the definitive life of the Union hero. His *Captain Sam Grant* ends with the famous Civil War campaigns still in the future, yet no one who reads it will fail to gain new insights into Grant's character, an odd mixture of sensitivity, seediness, alcoholism, and granite. Macartney's book, *Grant and His Generals*, utilizes fresh material to present new viewpoints on a number of well-known Union commanders. Macartney is no respecter of tradition in appraising their abilities, and his solid research gives weight to his judgments.

Turning from the academic cannonfire to examine nonmilitary aspects of the Civil War, we find historians busily filling in long-standing gaps in the social and economic record. For example, until 1952 we knew relatively little about the wartime railroads, but since that year three different books on this subject have appeared: Thomas Weber, *The Northern Railroads in the Civil War 1861-1865*, Robert C. Black, III, *The Railroads of the Confederacy*, and George Edgar Turner, *Victory Rode the Rails: The Strategic Place of the Railroads in the Civil War*. Weber and Black show how the war affected the railroads, North and South; Turner is more concerned with how the railroads affected the war on both sides. Thus the three studies supplement one another about as

much as they overlap, and taken together greatly augment our knowledge of this long neglected subject.

Two books have recently been devoted to the journalists who described the war for Northern newspaper readers. Bernard A. Weisberger's very readable *Reporters for the Union* advances the thesis that the battlefield was a journalistic training ground for Union reporters and that despite their many prejudices and failings they became professionals during the war. J. Cutler Andrews' *The North Reports the Civil War* presents on this same topic more detailed and precise information, such as a useful list of some three hundred reporters with their pen names and the newspapers that employed them.

Sound social histories of various aspects of the armed forces are becoming numerous. Bell Irvin Wiley, in *The Life of Billy Yank*, does for the Union soldier what he earlier did for Johnny Reb; he takes the fighting man out of battle and shows how he amused himself in camp, how he dressed, what he ate, and in general what kind of composite individual he was. Ella Lonn, in *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, has done as solid a monograph as her well-known study of foreigners in the Confederacy, published some sixteen years ago. She concludes that there were more than half a million foreign-born enlistments in the Union army alone. Two other social histories give the Negro soldier his due. *The Negro in the Civil War*, by Benjamin Quarles, calls attention to the Negro labor battalions as well as the Negro fighting men, and punches fresh holes in the legend of the slaves' indifference to the Northern cause and loyalty to their masters. *The Sable Arm*, by Dudley Taylor Cornish, concentrates on the Negro troops in the Union army, some 123,000 of them in July 1865, twelve per cent of the total enrollment. Cornish traces the steps by which colored men, in the face of Northern racial prejudice, were brought into the army, and after sifting the evidence in the *Official Records* concludes that Negro soldiers compared favorably with whites in training and combat, an achievement that won the Negro veteran considerable respect in the North after the Civil War.

Another American minority group, which numbered only about 150,000 in 1860, is the subject of Bertram Wallace Korn's scholarly

*American Jewry and the Civil War.* The author describes how American Jews united in pressuring Congress and President Lincoln into allowing Jewish chaplains in the army and curbing Grant's anti-Semitism. His freshest contribution, perhaps, is his portrayal of the rise of Judaeophobia in both North and South as the Jew became a popular scapegoat for the suffering occasioned by the later years of the war.

Anyone who has gained the impression from diaries and memoirs that army surgery in the sixties was simply a horrible, unsanitary hacking off of arms and legs should read George Worthington Adams' *Doctors in Blue: The Medical History of the Union Army in the Civil War*. Adams follows the progress of the Union Medical Bureau from near chaos to a later wartime efficiency that excited the admiration of European observers. Bureau doctors, before Lister's discoveries, learned that cleanliness kept down disease. More than an army medical history despite its compressed brevity, this illuminating book reveals a great deal about the general medical practices of the times. The needed study of doctors in gray is yet to appear, but some light on the terrible lack of medical supplies in the Confederacy, as a result of the blockade, is shed by Mary Elizabeth Massey's *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, a neatly defined monograph that brims with information about wartime make-shifts in food, clothing, and other daily necessities.

Social history is a strong point of the most comprehensive study of the South during the war, E. Merton Coulter's *The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865*, volume VII in the *History of the South* series. Coulter confines military events to one chapter, and though he does not slight the political and diplomatic story, he devotes ample space to the discussion of such topics as manufactures, newspapers, and religion. An exceptionally good classified bibliography completes this useful synthesis.

Though Reconstruction histories are steadily increasing in number, the period from 1865 to 1877 seems to attract considerably fewer historians than does the period of sectional conflict and war, perhaps because Reconstruction is of shorter duration, less dramatic, and more localized. The center of focus is the prostrate South instead of the divided and warring nation. It is the Southern historian rather more than the Northern who is interested in Re-

construction, but the time has long since passed when embattled writers in each of the Southern states felt the need of producing monographs that would rescue the conquered South from false Northern history. Today's student of the Reconstruction era, no matter where his sectional sympathies may lie, is likely to be a pretty objective fellow, more interested in sound facts and hypotheses than in special pleading. Even Reconstruction studies that relate to present-day controversial issues like racial segregation are more often than not characterized by temperate judgment and a relative lack of sectional bias.

Such a work is Joseph B. James' *The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment*. As the title indicates, James is mainly concerned with tracing the evolution of the amendment and deducing the ideas and attitudes of the men who sponsored it; therefore the book contains relatively little on the complex ratification question. As to the motives of the sponsors, James believes that they did not foresee the future connection between their amendment and segregation; he also, like others before him, finds little evidence to sustain the old "conspiracy theory" that clever lawyers consciously framed the amendment so as to make it a shield for corporate privilege.

Another treatment of the legal issues of this era, and an exceptionally able one, is *Pardon and Amnesty Under Lincoln and Johnson* by Jonathan Truman Dorris. Here for the first time a modern scholar makes a thorough examination of the vexing problems involved in deciding just what offense Southerners had committed when they gave allegiance to the Confederacy instead of to the United States, and clearly traces the tortuous evolution of the federal pardon and amnesty policies. He shows how Johnson accepted Lincoln's basic policies, and how Congress, which at first was under the sway of vindictives like Thaddeus Stevens, became more lenient in granting clemency as time went on. The United States Supreme Court, which appears rather feeble in some Reconstruction history, stands out in this work as the protector of the power of the president against congressional efforts to curtail presidential amnesty.

Teachers who have been required to take loyalty oaths in this modern Cold War period of conformity will be especially interested

in Harold Melvin Hyman's *Era of the Oath: Northern Loyalty Tests During the Civil War and Reconstruction*. As now, so then: significant numbers of Americans had to produce evidence of loyalty on demand. During the Civil War, Hyman points out, there was little tolerance in the North for the dissenter, and after the war had ended congressional Radicals demanded that Southern leaders prove they had never voluntarily supported the Confederacy. The instruments of such proof were the loyalty oaths established by various acts of Congress. That they were ineffective and merely excluded honorable men from government is the author's conclusion, which seems amply justified by the evidence. Although he wisely refrains from drawing strained parallels with the present, the lesson his study holds for today's lawmakers is obvious.

One of the most brilliant monographs in the field of Reconstruction history has advanced a new interpretation of the way in which Rutherford B. Hayes stepped into the presidency after the heated election of 1876 had ended and a pro-Republican Electoral Commission had awarded him all disputed electoral votes, thus shutting the Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden out of the White House despite his popular majority. According to the traditional story, the threat of a Democratic filibuster in early February, 1877, to block the final counting of the votes in Congress was ended by a conference held in the Wormley Hotel in Washington between friends of Hayes and Southern political leaders. The Hayes spokesmen were supposed to have promised the withdrawal of the last federal troops from the South in return for Democratic support in seating Hayes. But according to the evidence set forth in C. Vann Woodward's *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction*, the actual events were not so simple. The Wormley conference, Woodward demonstrates, had nothing to do with the compromise. Weeks earlier, negotiations leading to the final agreement had been initiated by spokesmen for Hayes, Northern railroad lobbyists, and Southern Democratic leaders who had formerly been Whigs. The Southerners threw their support to Hayes after receiving promises of federal aid for internal improvements in the South, including assistance to the Texas and Pacific Railroad. The irony of it all was that after Hayes had been seated the Republicans went back on their promises of economic aid. So



runs Woodward's interpretation. Some details of his analysis of the part played by Southern votes in Congress have been challenged, but in all likelihood the main outlines of his account will prove to be definitive.

After reading Woodward's book one should look into John F. Stover's *The Railroads of the South, 1865-1900: A Study in Finance and Control*. Here is the story of how northern financiers progressively took over railroads in the postwar South until by 1900 they controlled perhaps as much as ninety percent of Southern railway mileage. And for Northern influence of a different kind, consult Mary R. Dearing's *Veterans in Politics: The Story of the G. A. R.* It explains, among other things, how the Grand Army of the Republic—"Generally All Republicans" in popular parlance—strove to keep the war spirit alive and to censor textbooks that showed evidence of leniency toward the South.

If the new national prominence of the Negro has led to an increase in Civil War studies that deal with him, this may also help explain why books about the Negro during Reconstruction are multiplying. Two in particular are noteworthy: *The Negro Freedman*, by Henderson H. Donald, and *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau*, by George R. Bentley. Donald, using an objective sociological approach, studies the life conditions of the Negro during the three decades following emancipation. After examining such things as the Negro's reaction to freedom, his working and spending habits, family life, etc., he concludes that the former slaves in time made successful adjustments to free society except for being shut out of politics by the whites. Bentley's history of the chief federal agency for bringing about this social adjustment makes good use of the unpublished records of the Freedman's Bureau and of the O. O. Howard manuscripts. His conclusion, based upon a careful weighing of the role of the Bureau in Reconstruction, is that it definitely helped the Negro to gain in wealth, education, and political influence, but its methods angered Southern whites and intensified racial prejudice among them.

After Reconstruction—what? C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, volume IX in *A History of the South*, overlaps the Reconstruction period and carries the story onward. Outstanding among the volumes in this series, as valuable for the

errors it sweeps away as for the fresh information it presents, it serves as a reminder that Reconstruction did not really end abruptly in 1877 as the historians assume for convenience, but gradually faded away and merged the Old South and the Reconstructed South into the New South which actually was not so new after all.

To round up this survey it might be helpful to make brief mention of some recent books that could serve as immediate teaching aids. The best one-volume history is still James G. Randall's *The Civil War and Reconstruction*. That key figure of the period, the Negro, appears in fresh perspective in *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro*, edited by William Ranson Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, and in Philip S. Foner's four volumes, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*. Those who wish to know Lincoln first-hand should go to *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler and associates; the best one-volume compendium of Lincoln's writings is *The Living Lincoln*, edited by Paul M. Angle and Earl Schenck Miers.

For a most useful anthology of contemporary writings describing the Civil War in all its variety, see *The Blue and the Gray*, edited by Henry Steele Commager. A good pictorial history is *Divided We Fought*, edited by David Donald and associates. For field trips to Civil War battlefields Lt. Col. Joseph B. Mitchell's *Decisive Battles of the Civil War* offers generally sound summaries of the fighting, together with good campaign maps based on modern road maps and present-day landmarks.

Diaries, memoirs, and letters of soldiers abound, and whereas most of them used to describe the fighting in the East, now more and more relate to the Western theater. Two examples of this recent trend are *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade: The Journal of a Confederate Soldier*, edited by A. D. Kirwan, and *Soldier in the West: The Civil War letters of Alfred Lacy Hough*, edited by Robert G. Athearn. Green was a Jonny Reb in the ranks, Hough a perceptive and well-educated captain in the Union army. Each in his own way gives a graphic description of how the war was fought.

In conclusion a few generalizations might be pertinent, though they must of course be tentative because it is much too early to

see the Civil War and Reconstruction history of the fifties in proper perspective:

1. Despite the fact that the animosities which divided the nation nearly a century ago have almost if not completely changed from flames to ashes, it still seems difficult for historians to write about the causes of war without showing some sectional bias. The previously mentioned works of Nevins and Craven illustrate the point. With considerable accuracy, Nevins' interpretation of the coming of the war might be called a pro-Northern view and Craven's a pro-Southern one. Other writers on the subject show a similar tendency to take sides. Perhaps this is simply another way of saying that historians are first of all human beings with human sympathies. Some marvelous mechanical brain, in this technological age, may some day grind out a completely objective study of why and how the war came about—but whether this product would have much meaning is a question upon which it is interesting to reflect.

2. Strikingly evident in the recent Civil War history is an almost uncritical admiration of Lincoln. True, he is no longer a demigod; the scholars have brought him firmly to earth. But on the other hand, they are finding so many new talents in him and relating so many diverse aspects of the war era to him that one sometimes wonders where the process will end. One thing seems certain. Historians need never again speculate, as they once did, on whether the Lincoln theme can be exhausted. It cannot. It is here to stay.

3. A heightened interest in the Negro which may be traceable in part to the current segregation controversy is characteristic of the new history. Studies of the Negro in the Civil War era were available long before the fifties, but not much had been done on his contributions to the Northern war effort. This gap in the record is now being filled.

4. Social history, as distinct from old-fashioned political history, is taking up more and more space in the textbooks these days. It is therefore hardly surprising to find strong emphasis upon social history in the more specialized works on the Civil War and Reconstruction. Writers of general studies in this field pay much attention to developments in religion, education, philosophy and

literature, business and industry. Writers of monographs devote entire books to social themes, such as race relations. Rare indeed is the book that deals with politics and nothing else; present-day historians tend to analyze political events within the matrix of the socio-economic background.

5. Although atomic warfare has outmoded the tactics employed by Grant and Lee, the luster of Civil War military history has not dimmed. Quite the contrary. More readers than ever before are charging back and forth with the Blue and the Gray. Whether they are learning very much that is new about the famous battles is questionable, for although the new military studies come off the presses in increasing numbers, they do not greatly alter the known facts of the war. Two trends are apparent: increased concentration upon the war in the west, and a tendency to claim more military genius for Grant than earlier historians have been willing to concede him.

6. If fresh interpretations are not very abundant in the military studies, this generalization seems to apply also to historical writing in the entire Civil War and Reconstruction field. The more recent books owe much to earlier ones, and what is said is likely to be a development or refinement of what has been said before. There are exceptions, such as Woodward's reappraisal of the compromise of 1877 and Dorris' pathbreaking study of pardon and amnesty. But as yet in the fifties no sweeping new thesis like the economic interpretation of the war popularized by Charles and Mary Beard has been advanced. Surely, here is an opportunity for some creative young historian. The time is ripe for a broad reinterpretation of the whole Civil War era.

7. Although the recent history cannot be termed especially rich in new hypotheses, it can be characterized as sound, informative, and useful. It is based on high standards of research, and in general it is well written. The dull, sleep-inducing monograph still makes an occasional appearance, but there seems to be a growing awareness that history should be readable. This trend, which happily seems to extend at present through all American historical writing, will doubtless be welcomed by teachers who would like to see their students read more history.

8. As the output of good Civil War history increases, so does the

production of inferior works of a historical nature. The writers of quickie history are quite aware of the current popular interest in the Civil War, and they are capitalizing on it. One sometimes hears the prediction that by the time the centennial year has passed everyone from the student in the classroom to the general reader will be so sated with sectional conflict, with slavery and secession and Bull Run and Gettysburg, that an immense national yawn will greet any author who tries to write about this period of American history. However, not necessarily so. Appreciators of good books on the Civil War can take comfort in reflecting that superficial history has not in the past killed American interest in the failure and triumph of Union and probably will not do so now, even with the aid of TV. In all likelihood the reading public will continue to be interested in the fundamentally significant issues of the Civil War era, serious historians will publish more good books on the period, and teachers year after year will find fresh, absorbing lessons for their students in the great problems faced by Lincoln and Andrew Johnson and not quite solved by them, nor by us.

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